

Semen Kiselgof



This is a photo of my father Semen Aronovitch Kiselgof, it was taken in Leningrad in the 1930s.

I know that my father, Semen Aronovich Kiselgof, was born not far from Vitebsk, in Babinovichi, and that he was born in 1893. Father was a child, when his mother died. And his elder brother, Zinovy Kiselgof, lived in Petersburg, he was seventeen years older. So Father moved to Petersburg before the October Revolution, and Zinovy raised him and even replaced a father for him.

My father played the violin, he graduated from the Conservatoire with excellent grades. At home we had violins made by Amati, Father played them and I still remember him playing. He played mainly classics, he liked to play Paganini, and as a matter of fact he had quite a large repertoire.

My parents could have got to know each other only in Petersburg. They got to know each other after the Revolution, but they never told me when exactly they met. I know only that they knew each other not very long, only half a year, before they got married. Mother told me how he proposed to her: 'Simocka, let's live together!' I guess that they were from the same circle and both were very virtuous. They got married in 1921, and I don't think that there was a wedding ceremony, either Jewish, or Russian. They just registered their relations officially, since they were very poor.

After the Revolution they proved to my father, that the winning proletariat doesn't need any art, it needs economics instead, and so he began to learn the new profession in some of Leningrad Institute, and became an engineer/economist. That's why he had two university degrees. But I remember that when I was ten or twelve, he still played the violin in the cinema, which was situated on Sredny Avenue of Vasilievski Island, later it housed some club named after Uritsky, and today the Theater of Satire is situated there. Probably, he studied at some extra-mural courses, and then he began to work at 'Mechanobr.' He didn't play the violin any more and worked as an engineer five or six years before World War II started.